



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
*1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

January 30, 2004

The Honorable Bob Morton  
Chair, Senate Natural Resources, Energy & Water Committee  
Post Office Box 40466  
210 John A. Cherberg Building  
Olympia, Washington 98504-0466

Dear Senator Morton,

I am writing as chair of the Washington State Board of Health's Environmental Health Committee to share the Board's support of the concept behind Senate Bill 6271, relating to safe drinking water in Washington public schools, which will be heard in your committee today.

The Board is concerned about school environmental health issues, including drinking water quality. The Board recently adopted the federal arsenic standard of 10 parts per billion for Group A public drinking water systems, which will apply to the water supplies for many schools. The Board also plans to begin revising school environmental health rules, chapter 246-366 WAC, in July 2004.

The Board does have several concerns, however. For one, Senate Bill 6271 proposes that the Department of Health adopt public school drinking water standards for lead, copper, cadmium, zinc and corrosion, and for other contaminants. This conflicts with the existing rule development and regulatory framework. Currently the Board has authority to adopt rules "necessary to assure safe and reliable public drinking water and to protect public health," and to adopt rules for controlling environmental conditions for schools [RCW 43.20.050 (a) and (c)]. The bill currently assigns rule making in this area to the Department of Health. The Board and the Department are in complete agreement that rule making authority should remain with the Board.

A second concern is regarding the implementation of the proposed legislation. SB 6271 proposes impressive steps to test water quality; inform students, parents and school staff; establish inspection and action protocols; and evaluate compliance with requirements. These steps are likely to require additional staff capacity at school districts, and state and local health departments.

The Board therefore requests that SB 6271 take into consideration the Board's existing rule making authority and financial impacts of the proposed bill on those agencies implementing it. The Board also invites legislators, their staff and their constituents to participate in revising the school environmental health rules.

Sincerely,

Carl Osaki  
Chair, Washington State Board of Health Environmental Health Committee

cc: Senate Natural Resources, Energy & Water Committee members  
Senator Ken Jacobsen, Senate Parks, Fish and Wildlife Committee member  
Washington State Board of Health Members  
Mich'l Prentice Needham, Governor's Executive Policy Office  
Steve Meyer, Department of Health